

Reexamination Report

Jersey City Master Plan and Regulations

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The City of Jersey City adopted a new Master Plan in May of 2000, after more than a year of preparation, which included intensive staff research and preparation with community groups and leaders. The results were presented to and discussed within all six of the city's wards ultimately leading to a consensus on the city's future. The new Master Plan led to a total revision of the city's Zoning Ordinance into the Jersey City Land Development Ordinance, which was adopted in April of 2001.

Since adoption of the May 2000 Master Plan, there have been a number of reexamination reports adopted; followed by timely amendments to the Master Plan based on the recommendations of those reports. The first reexamination report was adopted by the Planning Board after five and a half years, in December 2005, and subsequent reports followed in 2006, 2007, 2011, with the latest report to date issued in January of 2015.

The Municipal Land Use Law requires a municipal review of the city's plans and regulations at least once every ten years, but such review may occur at any time deemed warranted by changing land use demands and conditions.

The reexamination report shall state:

- A. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in Jersey City at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.
- B. The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.
- C. The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies and objectives forming the basis for the master plan or development regulations as last revised, with particular regard to the density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, collection, disposition and recycling of designated recyclable materials, and changes in State, county and municipal policies and objectives.
- D. The specific changes recommended for the master plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.
- E. The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L. 1992, c. 79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) into the land use plan element of the municipal master plan, and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.

These requirements are addressed as follows:

The major problems and objectives relating to land development in Jersey City at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.

The last Master Plan Reexamination Report was adopted on March 10, 2015. At that time, the following major problems and objectives relating to historic preservation in Jersey City were identified as follows:

1. The **Historic Preservation Plan Element** should be updated throughout to reflect current conditions since the adoption of the Master Plan in 2000.
2. The **Introduction** and **Additional Historic Resources** should be amended to recommend a new City-Wide Historic Preservation Survey be undertaken as a follow up to the Cultural Resource Inventories (Phase I and Phase II) performed by Dr. Joseph Brooks and Mary Kierick, respectively, in the 1980s.
3. **Locally-Designated Historic Districts and Landmarks** should be amended and updated to include the nine additional, individual landmarks that have been designated since 2000, the recommendation of the Historic Preservation Commission to the Planning Board to adopt the West Bergen-East Lincoln Park Historic District. The exact boundaries of the West Bergen-East Lincoln Park District as defined in the Designation Report by Hunter Research, Inc. should be inserted into this section.
4. The **State and National Register of Historic Places** should be amended and updated to include additionally designated resources and to remove resources that have since become ineligible.
5. The **Regulatory Framework** should be updated to remove the exemption, since discontinued, that non-profit entities are not required to comply with the use and bulk standards of the Historic Districts.
6. The **Definitions** Section should be updated to reflect the increase in applications since 2000 and amended to remove the Certificates of Economic Hardship, since discontinued and property owner consent being necessary to designate a property or district.
7. **Local Designation of Additional Resources** should be amended to conduct further Designation Reports for additional Historic Districts, including but not limited to Bergen Hill and Sparrow Hill and the designation of cobblestone streets, yellow brick roads and statues, memorials and monuments in municipal parks.

The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.

All of the above issues and recommendations have been addressed in the last month since the adoption of the last report.

The planning board adopted the referenced text, definition and inventory changes to the Historic Plan Element. Additionally, the planning board voted to recommend the designation of the West Bergen-East Lincoln Park Historic District to City Council for a vote, which is currently considering the ordinance.

As addressed in the previous reexamination report the Land Use Plan has yet to be updated to better align with the goals and objectives of the Master Plan Circulation Element which was adopted in April of 2009. This is still a work in progress that was originally identified in the July 2011 master plan reexamination.

The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies, and objectives forming the basis for the master plan or development regulations as last revised, with particular regard to the density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, collection, disposition and recycling of designated recyclable materials, and changes in State, county and municipal policies and objectives.

While there have been no significant changes in the assumptions, policies, and objectives forming the basis for the master plan or development regulations as last revised in March 2015, there have been significant changes in land use demands and conditions in the past ten years and since the adoption of the first re-examination report in 2005, as it relates to Redevelopment plans and Additional Land Use Recommendations, that were not addressed in any of the five subsequent, interim reports.

Formula Business Restrictions

The Jersey City Master Plan, adopted in May 2000, includes a subsection of the Land Use Plan (section II) on Additional Land Use Recommendations that outlined goals and recommendations regarding: High Technology Uses, Wireless Communication, Housing for Senior Citizens, Signage, Scrap Yards, and Residential Site Improvements Standards (RSIS). This subsection has been used to give greater specificity to the above land uses recommending regulation to mitigate any detrimental effects. For example, this section prescribes that "...[Scrap Yards] uses should be clearly defined and carefully located in order to mitigate the impact on adjacent properties and neighborhoods. Impacts such as noise, odor, truck traffic, lighting and aesthetics should be controlled through design standards."

Since the 2000 adoption of the Jersey City Master Plan, the downtown section of Jersey City has experienced rapid development and population growth. Most large development projects have occurred adjacent to or within walking distance of Jersey City's downtown historic districts. While the growth has generated new retail development and increased retail rents throughout the downtown area, there is concern about the potential effects that new retail establishments will have on Downtown's unique community character. Downtown Jersey City supports a great variety of small, unique local businesses while most national chains have been located within enclosed shopping malls or strip shopping centers within the area. It is desired that this pattern of retail development remain in order to preserve Downtown's distinctive sense of place and unique neighborhood character. Businesses that are easily recognized as offering the same merchandise or menu items and having the same branding and styling as many other locations throughout the region detract from this well established community character and instills a sense of sameness to our neighborhood streets causing our neighborhoods to feel less unique. As new retail space is built and old businesses turn over into new businesses it is crucial to protect the existing pattern of unique local businesses populating the ground floor retail spaces. This is best accomplished by defining "formula businesses" that lack local character by having multiple locations within the region that exhibit standardized characteristics such as logos, menus, store decor, etc, and limiting those businesses in select areas and implementing a cap in historic districts and other portions of downtown where the traditional neighborhood pattern of unique local businesses is most prevalent.

The specific changes recommended for the master plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.

In order to address the issues outlined above, it is recommended that the master plan be amended to include the following:

1. The **Land Use Element, as it relates to Redevelopment Plans and Additional Land Use Recommendations**, should be updated to reflect current conditions since the adoption of the Master Plan in 2000.
2. The **Redevelopment Plans** subsection should be amended to remove the number of redevelopment plans and descriptive paragraphs of those plans in place in 2000. More general language such as goals and objectives that speaks to the intent and purpose of redevelopment plans should be included that will be easier to maintain and keep up-to-date.
3. The **Additional Land Use Regulations** subsection should be amended to recommend limitations on Formula Business.

The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the “Local Redevelopment and Housing Law,” P.L. 1992, c. 79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) into the land use plan element of the municipal master plan, and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.

Jersey City should continue to use the powers of the redevelopment statute as they have proven to serve us well as valuable development tools to renew our city. There are a great deal of redevelopment plans currently in place, and several more planned and in various stages of development. It is recommended that all adopted redevelopment plans, and any that may be adopted prior to the issuance of the next re-examination report, be incorporated into the Land Use Plan element of the Jersey City Master Plan by reference.